

The Snail's Spell

by Joanne Ryder

inside you.

Imagine

you are grey,

the color of smoke.

You are shrinking

smaller

and

smaller

and

smaller.

You are two inches long,
lying on the brown ground
all soft and grey.

Imagine you have no arms
and legs now.

Imagine you
cannot walk or run.

Instead you glide
and make your own
smooth sticky path
to ride on.

It is easy
to move this way
and it feels
cool and good.

You have a head
and a mouth
with rows of tiny teeth—
but your teeth are on your tongue!

You eat
by sticking out your tongue
and scraping
tiny bits of lettuce
into your tiny mouth.

As you glide slowly
on the damp brown ground,
you touch everything
with two short feelers.

On the top of your head
you have two long feelers.
You can stretch and stretch
these feelers
till they look like
long, long horns.

Your small black eyes
rest at the tips of these feelers.
One eye sees the brightness above.
The other feeler
curls around a lettuce leaf.
Now you can see the darkness there.

But your feeler
touches something in the dark,
something wriggling,
someone alive!

Fast as you can
you pull your feeler back.

You tuck your eye
inside your feeler
and hide it from danger.

Your eye glides
down and down
into your head.

When you feel safe,
your eye glides
up and up
to see your world again.
You are soft and small and slow
gliding up and down
and upside down.

On your back
lies a light, curled shell.
It is part of you
and it grows
as you grow.